

**CLAIMS:**

What is claimed is:

1. A method of generating an estimate of an amount of time required to complete a content request for content to be transmitted over a network, comprising:
  - receiving a first estimate of an amount of time to retrieve or prepare requested content in a content source device;
  - 10 generating a second estimate of an amount of time to receive the requested content over a communication link from the content source device;
  - 15 generating a third estimate of a total amount of time to complete the content request based on the first and second time estimates;
  - generating a graphical representation of the third estimate; and
  - outputting the graphical representation on a display device.
- 20 2. The method of claim 1, wherein the first estimate is generated using a table lookup of previously handled content requests.
- 25 3. The method of claim 2, wherein the table lookup includes finding one or more entries in a table that have parameters similar to parameters included in the content request.
- 30 4. The method of claim 2, wherein the table lookup includes identifying an estimate of a minimum, maximum

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and average amount of time to retrieve or prepare the requested content.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein the first estimate is  
5 generated based on information identifying the processes  
used to retrieve or prepare the requested content.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the information  
includes at least one of an identifier of a program to be  
10 used to retrieve or prepare the requested content, a  
typical execution time for the program, a number of lines  
of code in the program, and a number of lines of code per  
second handled by a processor of the content source  
device.

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7. The method of claim 1, wherein the second estimate  
is generated based on an amount of content to be  
transmitted and a transmission rate.

20 8. The method of claim 1, wherein the third estimate  
includes a minimum estimated time of completion, a  
maximum estimated time of completion and an average time  
of completion for the content request.

25 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the graphical  
representation includes an indicator for each of the  
minimum estimated time of completion, maximum estimated  
time of completion and average time of completion for the  
content request.

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10. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphical  
representation includes associated text, and wherein the

associated text is changed from a first text to a second text when the requested content begins to be received from the content source device.

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11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
updating the graphical representation based on the occurrence of an event.

10 12. The method of claim 11, wherein the event is an increment of a predetermined amount of time of a system clock.

15 13. The method of claim 11, wherein the event is receipt of a portion of the requested content.

14. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphical representation represents the third estimate as a combination of the first estimate and the second  
20 estimate, wherein a representation of the first estimate in the graphical representation is different from a representation of the second estimate in the graphical representation.

25 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the first estimate is represented in a different color than the second estimate.

30 16. The method of claim 1, wherein the graphical representation is a progress bar.

17. The method of claim 1, wherein the method is implemented by a web browser application on a computing device.

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18. The method of claim 1, wherein the method is implemented by a plugin application to a web browser application on a computing device.

10 19. A method of generating an estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare requested content, comprising:

receiving a request for content, the request including one or more parameters;

15 identifying previously completed request information regarding a previously completed request based on the one or more parameters, the information including a time required to retrieve or prepare the content of the previously completed request;

20 generating a time estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare the requested content based on the previously completed request information;

generating a graphical representation of the time estimate; and

25 outputting the graphical representation on a display device.

20. The method of claim 19, wherein identifying previously completed request information includes using a  
30 table lookup in a previously handled content request table.

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21. The method of claim 19, further comprising calculating an estimate of a minimum, maximum and average amount of time to retrieve or prepare the requested content based on the identified previously completed 5 request information.

22. The method of claim 19, wherein generating a time estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare the requested content includes generating the 10 time estimate based on a time to retrieve or prepare content identified in the previously completed request information, a system load at the time of the previously completed request, and a current system load.

15 23. The method of claim 20, further comprising: storing a new entry in the previously handled content request table for the request for content.

20 24. The method of claim 19, further comprising: transmitting the time estimate to a client device.

25. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for generating an estimate of an amount of time required to complete a content request for content to be 25 transmitted over a network, comprising:  
first instructions for receiving a first estimate of an amount of time to retrieve or prepare requested content in a content source device;  
second instructions for generating a second estimate 30 of an amount of time to receive the requested content over a communication link from the content source device;

third instructions for generating a third estimate of a total amount of time to complete the content request based on the first and second time estimates;

5 fourth instructions for generating a graphical representation of the third estimate; and

fifth instructions for outputting the graphical representation on a display device.

26. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein  
10 the second instructions for generating the second estimate includes instructions for generating the second estimate based on an amount of content to be transmitted and a transmission rate.

15 27. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the third estimate includes a minimum estimated time of completion, a maximum estimated time of completion and an average time of completion for the content request.

20 28. The computer program product of claim 27, wherein the graphical representation includes an indicator for each of the minimum estimated time of completion, maximum estimated time of completion and average time of completion for the content request.

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29. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the graphical representation includes associated text, and wherein the associated text is changed from a first text to a second text when the requested content begins  
30 to be received from the content source device.

30. The computer program product of claim 25, further comprising:

5 sixth instructions for updating the graphical representation based on the occurrence of an event.

31. The computer program product of claim 30, wherein the event is an increment of a predetermined amount of time of a system clock.

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32. The computer program product of claim 30, wherein the event is receipt of a portion of the requested content.

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33. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the graphical representation represents the third estimate as a combination of the first estimate and the second estimate, wherein a representation of the first estimate in the graphical representation is different 20 from a representation of the second estimate in the graphical representation.

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34. The computer program product of claim 33, wherein the first estimate is represented in a different color 25 than the second estimate.

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35. The computer program product of claim 25, wherein the graphical representation is a progress bar.

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36. A computer program product in a computer readable medium for generating an estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare requested content,

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comprising:

first instructions for receiving a request for content, the request including one or more parameters;

second instructions for identifying previously

5 completed request information regarding a previously completed request based on the one or more parameters, the information including a time required to retrieve or prepare the content of the previously completed request;

10 third instructions for generating a time estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare the requested content based on the previously completed request information;

fourth instructions for generating a graphical representation of the time estimate; and

15 fifth instructions for outputting the graphical representation on a display device.

37. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein the second instructions for identifying previously

20 completed request information include instructions for using a table lookup in a previously handled content request table.

38. The computer program product of claim 36, further comprising sixth instructions for calculating an estimate of a minimum, maximum and average amount of time to retrieve or prepare the requested content based on the identified previously completed request information.

30 39. The computer program product of claim 36, wherein the third instructions for generating a time estimate of

an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare the requested content include instructions for generating the time estimate based on a time to retrieve or prepare content identified in the previously completed request  
5 information, a system load at the time of the previously completed request, and a current system load.

40. The computer program product of claim 37, further comprising:

10 sixth instructions for storing a new entry in the previously handled content request table for the request for content.

15 41. The computer program product of claim 36, further comprising:

sixth instructions for transmitting the time estimate to a client device.

20 42. An apparatus for generating an estimate of an amount of time required to complete a content request for content to be transmitted over a network, comprising:

means for receiving a first estimate of an amount of time to retrieve or prepare requested content in a content source device;

25 means for generating a second estimate of an amount of time to receive the requested content over a communication link from the content source device;

30 means for generating a third estimate of a total amount of time to complete the content request based on the first and second time estimates;

means for generating a graphical representation of the third estimate; and

means for outputting the graphical representation on a display device.

43. An apparatus for generating an estimate of an amount 5 of time required to retrieve or prepare requested content, comprising:

means for receiving a request for content, the request including one or more parameters;

10 means for identifying previously completed request information regarding a previously completed request based on the one or more parameters, the information including a time required to retrieve or prepare the content of the previously completed request;

15 means for generating a time estimate of an amount of time required to retrieve or prepare the requested content based on the previously completed request information;

means for generating a graphical representation of the time estimate; and

20 means for outputting the graphical representation on a display device.